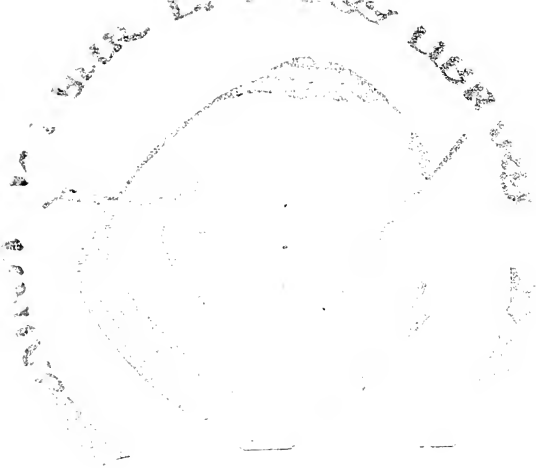


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BY

Hon. George F. Hoar,

United States Senator.



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A BOY SIXTY YEARS AGO,  
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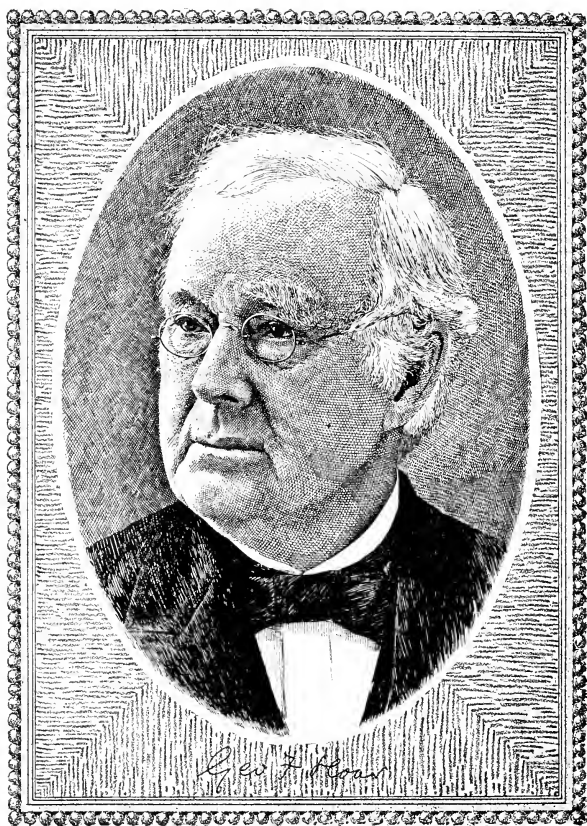
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# A Boy Sixty Years Ago,

By

Hon. George F. Hoar,

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REPRINT FROM THE YOUTH'S COMPANION,

MARCH 10, 17, 24, 1898.

Boston.

Perry Mason & Company.

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“THE shot heard 'round the world” was fired near Concord, Massachusetts, and then and there, in a certain sense, the Nation was born. Concord, in the early years of the present century, was still distinctively American. At that time, too, Emerson, Hawthorne, Thoreau and others of the Concord group, were influencing literature almost as profoundly as the Fathers had affected statecraft.

Simple and wholesome lives, inspired alike by virile patriotism and generous culture, were led in this little democracy. Looking back on boyhood, the distinguished senior Senator from Massachusetts draws a fascinating picture of the plain manners and the great men.





## A Boy Sixty Years Ago.



BELIEVE that boys nowadays are more manly and mature than they were in my time. Perhaps this is partly because the boys show more gravity in my presence, now I am an old man, than they did when I was a boy myself. But in giving an account of the life of a boy sixty years ago, I must describe it as I saw it, even if it appear altogether childish and undignified.

The life and character of a country are determined in a large degree by the sports of its boys. The Duke of Wellington used to say that the victory at Waterloo was won on the playing-fields at Eton. That is the best people where the boys are manly and where the men have a good deal of the boy in them.

Perhaps all my younger readers do not know how much that makes up, not only the luxury, but the comfort of life, has first come in within the memory of persons now living. The household life of my childhood was not much better in those respects than that of a well-to-do Roman or Greek. It had not improved a great deal for two thousand years. There were no house-warming furnaces, and stoves were almost unknown. There were no double windows, and the houses were warmed by open fires. There were no matches.

There were no water-pipes in the houses, and no provision was made for discharging sewage.

There were no railroads, telegraphs or telephones. Letter postage to New York from Boston was twenty-five cents. None of the modern agricultural machinery then existed, not even good modern plows. Crops were planted by hand and cultivated with the hoe and spade. Vegetables were dug with the hoe, and hay and grain cut with the sickle or scythe. There were no ice-houses. The use of ice for keeping provisions or cooling water was unknown.

My father was well-to-do, and his household lived certainly as well as any family in the town of Concord, where I was born. I have no doubt a Roman boy two hundred years before Christ, or an Athenian boy four hundred years before Christ, lived quite as well as I did, if not better.

#### On Cold Winter Mornings.

The boy got up in the morning and dressed himself in a room into which the cold air came through the cracks in the window. If the temperature were twenty degrees below zero outside, it was very little higher inside. If he were big enough to make the fires, he made his way down-stairs in the dark of a winter morning and found, if the fire had been properly raked up the night before, a few coals in the ashes in the kitchen fireplace. The last person who went to bed the night before had done exactly what Homer describes as the practice in Ulysses' time, when he tells us that Ulysses covered himself with leaves after he was washed ashore in Phaiakia :

“He lay down in the midst, heaping the fallen leaves above, as a man hides a brand in a dark bed of ashes, at some outlying farm where

neighbors are not near, hoarding a seed of fire to save his seeking elsewhere."

But first he must get a light. Matches are not yet invented. So he takes from the shelf over the mantelpiece an old tin or brass candlestick with a piece of tallow candle in it, and with the tongs takes a coal from the ashes, and holds the candle wick against the coal and gives a few puffs with his breath. If he have good luck, he lights the wick, probably after many failures.

### **A First-of-April Candle.**

My mother had a very entertaining story connected with the old-fashioned way of getting a light. Old Jeremiah Mason, who was probably the greatest lawyer we ever had in New England, unless we except Daniel Webster, studied law in my uncle's office and shared a room in his house with another law student. One April Fool's day the two young gentlemen went out late in the afternoon, and my aunt, a young unmarried girl who lived with her sister, and another girl, went into the room and took the old half-burnt candle out of the candlestick, cut a piece of turnip to resemble it, cut out a little piece like a wick at the end, blackened it with ink, and put it in the candlestick.

When Mr. Mason came in in the dark, he took a coal up with the tongs and put it against the wick, and puffed and puffed, until after a long and vexatious trial he discovered what was the matter. He said nothing but waited for his chum to come in, who went through the same trial. When they discovered the hoax they framed an elaborate complaint in legal jargon against the two roguish girls, and brought them

to trial before a young lawyer of their acquaintance. The young ladies were found guilty and sentenced to pay as a fine a bowl of egg-nog.

### Thawing out the Pump.

After getting his candle lighted, the boy takes dry kindling, which has been gathered the night before, and starts a fire. The next thing is to get some water. He is lucky if the water in the old cast-iron kettle which hangs on the crane in the fireplace be not frozen. As soon as the fire is started he goes outdoors to thaw out the pump, if they have a wooden pump. But that is all frozen up, and he has to get some hot water from his kettle to pour down over the piston till he can thaw it out. Sometimes he would have an old-fashioned well, sunk too low in the ground for the frost to reach it, and could get water with the old oaken bucket.

He brings in from out-of-doors a pail or two of water. If there has been a snow-storm the night before, he has to shovel a path to the wood-shed, where he can get the day's supply of wood from outside, and then from the doors of the house out to the street. Meantime the woman whose duty it is to get breakfast makes her appearance.

The wooden pump, which took the place of the old well in many dooryards, was considered a great invention. We all looked with huge respect upon Sanford Adams of Concord, who invented it, and was known all over the country.

He was quite original in his way. The story used to be told of him that he called at my father's house one day to get some advice as to a matter of law. Father was at dinner and went

to the door himself. Mr. Adams stated his case in a word or two as he stood on the door-step, to which father gave him his answer, the whole conversation not lasting more than two minutes.

He asked Mr. Hoar what he should pay, and father said, "Five dollars." Mr. Adams paid it at once, and father said, "By the way, there is a little trouble with my pump. It does not draw water. Will you just look at it?" So Mr. Adams went around the corner of the shed, moved the handle of the pump, and put his hand down and fixed a little spigot which was in the side, which had got loose, and the pump worked perfectly. Father said, "Thank you, sir." To which Adams replied: "It will be five dollars, Mr. Hoar," and father gave him back the same bill he had just taken.

I am afraid that the sympathy of the people who told the story was with the pump-maker and not with the lawyer.

### **The use of "Tin Kitchens."**

The great kitchen fireplace presented a very cheerful appearance compared with the black range or stove of to-day. It was from six to eight or ten feet wide, with a great chimney. In many houses you could stand on the hearth and look up the chimney and see the stars on a winter night. Across the fireplace hung an iron crane, which swung on a hinge or pivot, from which hung a large number of what were called pothooks and trammels. From these were suspended the great kettles and little kettles and the griddles and pots and boilers for the cooking processes.

The roasting was done in a big "tin kitchen," which stood before the fire, in which meats or

poultry were held by a large iron spit, which pierced them and which could be revolved to present one side after the other to the blaze. Sometimes there was a little clockwork which turned the spit automatically, but usually it was turned round from time to time by the cook. As you know, they used to have in England little dogs called turnspits, trained to turn a wheel for this purpose. A little door in the rear of this tin kitchen gave access for basting the meat. In the large trough at the bottom the gravy was caught.

No boy of that day will think there is any flavor like that of roast turkey and chicken or of the doughnuts and pancakes or griddle-cakes which were cooked by these open fires.

By the side of the fireplace, with a flue entering the chimney, was a great brick oven, big enough to bake all the bread needed by a large family for a week or ten days. The oven was heated by a brisk fire made of birch or maple or some very rapidly burning wood. When the coals were taken out, the bread was put in, and the oven was shut with two iron doors. The baking-day was commonly Saturday.

### **Baked Beans for Sunday.**

When the bread was taken out Saturday afternoon it was usual to put in a large pot of beans for the Sunday dinner. They were left there all night and the oven was opened in the morning and enough came out for breakfast, when there was put into the oven a pot of Indian pudding, which was left with the rest of the beans for the Sunday dinner.

The parlor fire was a very beautiful sight, with

the big logs and the sparkling walnut or oak wood blazing up. Some of the housekeepers of that time had a good deal of skill in arranging the wood in a fireplace so as to make of it a beautiful piece of architecture. Lowell describes these old fires very well in his ballad, "The Courtin':"

A fireplace filled the room's one side  
With half a cord o' wood in —  
There warn't no stoves (tell comfort died)  
To bake ye to a puddin'.

The wannut logs shot sparkles out  
Towards the pootiest, bless her!  
An' leetle flames danced all about  
The chiny on the dresser.

Agin' the chimbley crooknecks hung,  
An' in amongst 'em rusted  
The ole queen's arm thet Gran'ther Young  
Fetched back from Concord busted.

We did not have fireplaces like this in my father's house, although they were common in the farmers' houses round about. We ought to have had the "ole queen's arm." My great-grandfather, Abijah Pierce of Lincoln, was at Concord bridge in the Lincoln company of which his son-in-law, Samuel Hoar, was lieutenant. He had been chosen colonel of the regiment of the minutemen the day before, but had not qualified and had not got his accoutrements; and so he went into battle armed with nothing but a cane.

He crossed the bridge, and from one of two British soldiers who lay wounded and dying, took a cartridge-box and musket, which he used during the day and preserved for many years. I suppose it was the first trophy of the Revolution. A great many years afterward one of the neighbors borrowed the musket of my uncle to take to a

Cornwallis, and it was lost and never recovered. I would give its weight in gold to get it back.

In the coldest weather the heat did not come out a great way from the hearth, and the whole family gathered close about the fire to keep warm. It was regarded as a great breach of good manners to go between any person and the fire. The fireplace was the centre of the household, and was regarded as the type and symbol of the home. The boys all understood the force of the line :

Strike for your altars and your fires!

I wonder if any boy among my young readers nowadays would be stirred by an appeal to strike for his furnace or his air-tight stove.

### **When Play was Forbidden.**

Sunday was kept with Jewish strictness. The boys were not allowed to go out-of-doors except to church. They could not play at any game or talk about matters not pertaining to religion. They were not permitted to read any books except such as were "good for Sunday." There were very few religious story-books in those days, and what we had were of a dreary kind; so the boy's time hung heavy on his hands.

"Pilgrim's Progress," with its rude prints, was, however, a great resource. We conned it over and over again, and knew it by heart. An elder brother of mine who was very precocious was extremely fond of it, especially of the picture of the fight between Apollyon and Christian, where the fiend with his head covered with stiff, sharp bristles "straddled clear across the road " to stop Christian in his way.



Old Dr. Lyman Beecher, who had his stiff gray hair cropped short all over his head, made a call at our house one afternoon. While he was waiting for my mother to come down, the little fellow came into the room and took a look up at the doctor, and then trotted round to the other side and looked up at him again. He said, "I think, sir, you look like Apollyon."

The doctor was infinitely amused at being compared to the personage of whom, in his own opinion and that of a good many other good people, he was then the most distinguished living antagonist.

The church was an old-fashioned wooden building, painted yellow, of Dutch architecture, with galleries on three sides, and on the fourth a pulpit with a great sounding-board over it, into which the minister got by quite a high flight of stairs. Just below the pulpit was the deacons' seat, where the four deacons sat in a row. The pews were old-fashioned square, high pews, reaching up almost to the top of the head of a boy ten years old when he was standing up.

The seats were without cushions and with hinges. When the people stood up for prayer the seats were turned up for greater convenience of standing, and when the prayer ended they came down all over the church with a slam, like a small cannonade.

### **A Startling Command.**

One Sunday, in the middle of the sermon, the old minister, Doctor Ripley, stood up in the pulpit and said in a loud voice, "Simeon, come here. Take your hat and come here." Simeon was a small boy who lived in the doctor's family

and sat in the gallery. We boys all supposed that Simeon had been playing in church, or had committed some terrible offence for which he was to be punished in sight of the whole congregation.

Simeon came down trembling and abashed, and the doctor told him to go home as fast as he could and get the Thanksgiving Proclamation. The doctor filled up the time as well as he could with an enormously long prayer, until the boy got back. Simeon confessed to some of the boys that he had been engaged in some mischief just before he was called, and he was terribly afraid the doctor had caught him.

This old church with its tower, yellow spire, old clock and weathercock, seems to me as I look back on it to have been a very attractive piece of architecture. It was that church which suggested to Emerson the leading thought in one of his most famous poems, "The Problem."

### **Announcing the Banns.**

In those days, when people were to be married the law required notice to be given of their intention by proclaiming it aloud in the church three Sundays in succession. So just before the service began, the old town clerk would get up and proclaim: "There is a marriage intended between Mr. John Brown of this town and Miss Sarah Smith of Sudbury," and there was great curiosity in the congregation to hear the announcement. The town clerk in my boyhood had been a wealthy old bachelor for whom the young ladies had set their caps in vain for two generations. One day he astonished the congregation by proclaiming: "There is a marriage intended

between Dr. Abiel Keywood" — which was his own name — "and Miss Lucy P. Fay, both of Concord." That was before I can remember, as his boys were about my age.

Doctor Ripley, the minister in Concord, was an old man who had been settled there during the Revolutionary War, and was over the parish sixty-two years. He was an excellent preacher and scholar, and his kindly despotism was submitted to by the whole town. His way of pronouncing would sound very queer now, though it was common then. I well remember his reading the lines of the hymn —

Let every critter jine  
To praise the eternal God.

### Survivors of the Revolution.

Scattered about the church were the good gray heads of many survivors of the Revolution — the men who had been at the bridge on the 19th of April, and who made the first armed resistance to the British power. They were very striking and venerable figures, with their queues and knee-breeches and shoes with shining buckles. Men were more particular about their apparel in those days than we are now. They had great stateliness of behavior, and admitted of little familiarity.

They had heard John Buttrick's order to fire, which marked the moment when our country was born. The order was given to British subjects. It was obeyed by American citizens. Among them was old Master Blood, who saw a ball strike the water when the British fired their first volley. I heard many of the old men tell their stories of the Battle of Concord, and of the capture of Burgoyne.

I lay down on the grass one summer afternoon, when old Amos Baker of Lincoln, who was in the Lincoln Company on the 19th of April, told me the whole story. He was very indignant at the claim that the Acton men marched first to attack the British because the others hesitated. He said, "It was because they had bagnets [bayonets]. The rest of us hadn't no bagnets."

### How Jonathan "Got Up."

One day a few years later, when I was in college, I walked up from Cambridge to Concord, through Lexington, and had a chat with old Jonathan Harrington by the roadside. He told me he was on the Common when the British Regulars fired upon the Lexington men. He did not tell me then the story which he told afterward at the great celebration at Concord in 1850. He and Amos Baker were the only survivors who were there that day. He said he was a boy about fifteen years old on April 19, 1775. He was a fifer in the company. He had been up the greater part of the night helping get the stores out of the way of the British, who were expected, and went to bed about three o'clock, very tired and sleepy. His mother came and pounded with her fist on the door of his chamber, and said, "Git up, Jonathan! The Reg'lars are comin' and somethin' must be done!"

Governor Briggs repeated this anecdote in the old man's presence at Concord. Charles Storey, a noted wit, father of the eminent lawyer, Moorfield Storey, sent up to the chair this toast: "When Jonathan Harrington got up in the morning on April 19, 1775, a near relative and namesake of his got up about the same time—

Brother Jonathan. But his mother didn't call him."

A very curious and amusing incident is said, and I have no doubt truly, to have happened at this celebration. It shows how carefully the great orator, Edward Everett, looked out for the striking effects in his speech. He turned in the midst of his speech to the seat where Amos Baker and Jonathan Harrington sat, and addressed them. At once they both stood up, and Mr. Everett said, with fine dramatic effect, "Sit, venerable friends. It is for us to stand in your presence."

After the proceedings were over, old Amos Baker was heard to say to somebody, "What do you suppose Squire Everett meant? He came to us before his speech and told us to stand up when he spoke to us, and when we stood up, he told us to sit down."

### **A Little Maid to Washington.**

So you will understand how few lives separate you from the time when our country was born, and the time when all our people were British subjects. My mother, who died in 1866, sat in Washington's lap when he visited her father's house in her childhood, and remembered well what he said to her. A sister of hers, then a little girl eleven years old, went to the door when Washington took his leave, and opened it for him to go out. He put his hand on her head and said, "My little lady, I wish you a better office." She dropped a courtesy and answered, quick as lightning, "Yes, sir, to let you in."

But to come back to our old meeting-house. The windows rattled in the winter, and the cold

wind came in through the cracks. There was a stove which was rather a modern innovation; but it did little to temper the coldness of a day in midwinter. We used to carry to church a little foot-stove with a little tin pan in it, which we filled with coal from the stove in the meeting-house, and the ladies of the family would pass it round to each other to keep their toes from freezing; but the boys did not get much benefit from it.

### **Schooldays and Holidays.**

They had good schools in Concord, and the boys generally were good scholars and read good books. So whenever they thought fit they could use as good language as anybody; but their speech with one another was in the racy, pithy Yankee dialect, which Lowell has made immortal in the "Biglow Papers." It was not always grammatical, but as well adapted for conveying wit and humor and shrewd sense as the Scotch of Burns.

The boys knew very well how to take the conceit or vanity out of their comrades. In the summer days all the boys of the village used to gather at a place on the river, known as Thayer's swimming-place, about half a mile from the town pump, which was the centre from which all distances were measured in those days. There was a little gravel beach where you could wade out a rod or two, and then for a rod or two the water was over the boy's head. It then became shallow again near the opposite bank. So it was a capital place to learn to swim.

After they came out, the boys would sit down on the bank and have a sort of boys' exchange,

in which all matters of interest were talked over, and a great deal of good-natured chaff was exchanged. Any newcomer had to pass through an ordeal of this character, in which his temper and quality were thoroughly tried. I remember now an occasion which must have happened when I was not more than eight or ten years old, when a rather awkward-looking greenhorn had come down from New Hampshire and made his appearance at the swimming-place. The boys, one after another, tried him by putting mocking questions or attempting to humbug him with some large story. He received it all with patience and good nature until one remark seemed to sting him from his propriety. He turned with great dignity upon the offender, and said, "Was that you that spoke, or was it a punkin busted?" We all thought that it was well said, and took him into high favor.

#### **The River Road to Billerica.**

I suppose the outdoor winter sports have not changed much since my childhood. The sluggish Concord River used to overflow its banks and cover the broad meadows for miles, where we found excellent skating, and where the water would be only a foot or two in depth. The boys could skate for ten miles to Billerica and ten miles back, hardly going over deep water, except at the bridges, the whole way.

Sleigh-riding was then what it is now. There were a few large sleighs owned in the town which would hold thirty or forty persons, and once or twice in the winter the boys and girls would take a ride to some neighboring town when the sleighing was good.

The indoor games were marbles, checkers, backgammon, dominoes, hunt-the-slipper, blind-man's buff, and in some houses, where they were not too strict, they played cards. High-low-jack, sometimes called all-fours or seven-up, everlasting and old maid were the chief games of cards. Most of these games have come down from a very early antiquity.

The summer outdoor games were mumble-the-peg, high-spy, snap-the-whip, a rather dangerous performance, in which a long row of boys, with the biggest boy at one end, and tapering down to the smallest at the other end, would run over a field or open space until suddenly the big boy would stop, turn half around, and stand still and hold fast with all his might. The result was that the boy next to him had to move a very little distance, but the little fellow at the end was compelled to describe a half-circle with great rapidity, and was sometimes hurled across the field, and brought up with a heavy fall. There were thread-the-needle, hunt-the-red-lion and football, played very much as it is now, except with less system and discipline, and various games of ball. These games of ball were much less scientific and difficult than the modern games. Chief were four-old-cat, three-old-cat, two-old-cat and base.

### **What the Boys Learned at School.**

We had fewer studies at our school than now. The boys who did not go to college learned to read and write, perhaps an elementary history of the United States, and arithmetic, and occasionally made some little progress in algebra. On Saturdays we used to "speak pieces." Our



favorites were some spirited lyric, like "Scots Wha Hae" or Pierpont's "Stand, the ground's your own, my braves," "The boy stood on the burning deck," and "Bernardo del Carpio." Sometimes, though not often, some comic piece was chosen, like "Jack Downing's Tax on Old Bachelors."

Those who fitted for college added Latin and Greek to these studies. The children were sent to school earlier than is the present fashion, and had long school hours and few vacations. There were four vacations in the year, of a week each, and three days at Thanksgiving time. Little account was made of Christmas. The fashion of Christmas presents was almost wholly unknown. The boys used to be allowed to go out of school to study in the warm summer days, and would find some place in a field, and sometimes up in the belfry of the little schoolhouse. I remember studying Cæsar there with George Brooks, afterward judge, and reading with him an account of some battle where Cæsar barely escaped being killed, on which Brooks's comment was, "I wish to thunder he had been!"

### **In the Neighboring Orchards.**

I am afraid the boys did not respect the property of the owners of the neighboring apple orchards, as undoubtedly the better-trained boys of modern times do now. We understood the law to be that all apples that grew on the branches extending over the highway were public property, and I am afraid that when the owner was not about we were not very particular as to the boundary-line. This seems to have been a trait of boy nature for generations. You

know Sidney Smith's account of the habit of boys at his school to rob a neighboring orchard, until the farmer bought a large, savage bulldog for his protection. Some of the big boys told Sidney that if a boy would get down on his hands and knees and go backward toward the dog, the dog would be frightened, and he could get the apples. He tried the experiment unsuccessfully, and with the result that he concluded, as he says, that "it makes no difference to a bulldog which end of a boy he gets hold of, if he only gets a good hold."

### **Severe School Discipline.**

The discipline of the schoolmaster in those days was pretty severe. For slight offences the boys were deprived of their recess or compelled to study for an hour after the school was dismissed. The chief weapon of torture was the ferule, to the efficacy of which I can testify from much personal knowledge. The master had in his desk, however, a cowhide for gross cases. I do not remember knowing how that felt from personal experience, but I remember very well seeing it applied occasionally to the big boys.

In the infant schools, which were kept by women, of course the discipline was not expected to be so severe. The schoolmistress in those days wore what was called a busk — a flat piece of lancewood, hornbeam, or some other like tough and elastic wood, thrust into a sort of pocket or sheath in her dress, which came up almost to the chin and came down below the waist. This was intended to preserve the straightness and grace of her figure. When the small boy misbehaved, the schoolma'am would unsheath this

weapon, and for some time thereafter the culprit found sitting down exceedingly uncomfortable.

Sometimes the sole of the schoolmistress's slipper answered the same purpose, and sometimes a stick from some neighboring birch-tree. It all came to pretty much the same thing in the end. The schoolmistress knew well how to accomplish her purpose. There was a diversity of gifts but the spirit remained the same.

We were put to school much earlier than children are now, and were more advanced in our studies on the whole. I began to study Latin on my sixth birthday. When I was nine years old I was studying Greek, and had read several books of Virgil. We were not very thorough Latin scholars, even when we entered college, but could translate Virgil and Cicero and Cæsar and easy Greek like Xenophon.

### **Boy Soldiers and Real Soldiers.**

The boys occasionally formed military companies and played soldier, but these did not, so far as I remember, last very long. There was also a company of Indians, who dressed in long white shirts, with pieces of red flannel sewed on them. They had wooden spears. That was more successful, and lasted some time.

They were exceedingly fond of seeing the real soldiers. There were two full companies in Concord, the artillery and the light infantry. The artillery had two cannon captured from the British, which had been presented to the company by the legislature in honor of April 19, 1775. When these two companies paraded, they were followed by an admiring train of small boys all day long, if the boys could get out of

school. I remember on one occasion there was a great rivalry between the companies, and one of them got the famous Brigade Band from Boston, and the other an equally famous band, called the Boston Brass Band, in which Edward Kendall, the great musician, was the player on the bugle. A very great day indeed was the muster-day, when sometimes an entire brigade would be called out for drill. These muster-days happened three or four times in my boyhood at Concord.

But the great day of all was what was called "Cornwallis," which was the anniversary of the capture of Cornwallis at Yorktown. There were organized companies in uniform representing the British army and an equally large number of volunteers, generally in old-fashioned dress, and with such muskets and other accoutrements as they could pick up, who represented the American army. There was a parade and a sham fight which ended as all such fights, whether sham or real, should end, in a victory for the Americans, and Cornwallis and his troops were paraded, captive and ignominious. I quite agree with Hosea Biglow when he says, "There is fun to a Cornwallis, though ; I aint a-goin' to deny it."

#### **"If the French Beat Us."**

The boys cared little for politics, though they used to profess the faith of their fathers ; but every boy sometimes imagined himself a soldier, and his highest conception of glory was to "lick the British." I remember walking home from school with a squad of little fellows at the time Andrew Jackson issued his famous message, when he threatened war if the French did not

pay us our debt. We discussed the situation with great gravity, and concluded that if the French beat us, we should have a king to rule over us.

Besides the two military companies, there was another called the "Old Shad." The law required every able-bodied man of military age to turn out for military training and inspection on the last Wednesday in May; they turned out just to save the penalty of the law, and used to dress in old clothes, and their awkward evolutions were the object of great scorn to the small boy of the time.

### **A Lively Little Town.**

The streets of Concord were made lively by the stage-coaches and numerous teams. There were four taverns in the town, all well patronized, with numerous sleeping-rooms. Two of them had large halls for dancing. A great many balls were given, to which persons came from the neighboring towns.

There was an excellent fiddler named John Wesson, who continued to give the benefit of his talent to all parties, public and private, down to the time of the war, when he said he would not play a dancing tune till the boys came home. He died soon after, and I do not know whether his music was ever heard again. These taverns were crowded with guests. One principal route for stages and teams to New Hampshire, Vermont and Canada passed through Concord.

There were several lines of stages, one from Lowell to Framingham, and two at least from Boston. The number of passengers, which now are all carried by rail, was so large that extras

were frequently necessary. The teams were very often more than the barns of the taverns in the town could accommodate, and on summer nights the wagons would extend for long distances along the village street with horses tied behind them.

### **The First Temperance Lecture.**

The sound of the toddy stick was hardly interrupted in the barroom inside from morning till night. The temperance reform had not made great headway in my youthful days. It was not uncommon to see farmers, bearing names highly respected in the town, lying drunk by the roadside on a summer afternoon, or straggling along the streets. The unpainted farmhouses and barns had their broken windows stuffed with old hats or garments. I have heard Nathan Brooks, who delivered the first temperance lecture in the town, at the request of the selectmen, say that after it was over he and the selectmen and some of the principal citizens went over to the tavern, and each took a mug of flip.

There were great quantities of huckleberries in the pastures about Concord, and the sweet high blackberries abounded by the roadside. There were plenty of chestnuts in the woods, and the walnut, or pig-nut, also abounded; so that berrying and nutting were favorite pastimes.

When I was a small boy a party of us went down to Walden woods, afterward so famous as the residence of Henry Thoreau. There was an old fellow named Tommy Wyman, who lived in a hut near the pond, who did not like the idea of having the huckleberry-fields near him invaded by the boys. He told us it was not safe for us

to go there. He said there was an Indian doctor in the woods who caught small boys and cut out their livers to make medicine. We were terribly frightened, and all went home in a hurry.

When we got near the town, we met old John Thoreau, with his son Henry, afterward so well known, and I remember his amusement when I told him the story. He said, "If I meet him, I will run this key down his throat," producing a key from his pocket. We reported the occurrence at the village store, but were unable to excite any interest in the subject.

### Thanksgiving Days.

Thanksgiving was then, as it is and ought to be now, the great day of the year. All the children were at home. The ambition of the head of the house was to get the largest turkey that money could buy. No Thanksgiving dinner was quite complete unless there were a baby on hand belonging to some branch of the family, no bigger than the turkey. The preparation for Thanksgiving was very interesting to the small boy mind. A boiled or roasted turkey, a pair of chickens, chicken pie, wonderful cranberry sauce, a plum pudding, and all manner of apple pies, mince pies, squash pies, pumpkin pies, and nuts, raisins, figs and noble apples made part of the feast. I suppose Thanksgiving customs have changed less than most others, except in one particular. I do not believe there is a small boy's stomach in this generation that can hold a tenth part of what used to go into mine, not only on Thanksgiving day, but on the days before and after. The raisins were to be picked over, the nuts and citron got ready, when Thanksgiving

was coming on, of all which we took abundant tolls. The cold and warmed-over dishes lasted through the rest of the week. I do not know what the Jewish festival or the old Roman banquets might have been, but they could not have equalled a New England Thanksgiving week in a house in the country.

The doctor in those days was a terror to the small boy. The horrible and nasty castor oil, ipecac and calomel, and the salts and senna, sulphur and molasses taken three mornings in succession and then missed three mornings, were worse than any sickness. Of the last I speak only from hearsay, not from personal knowledge. Then the cupping and bleeding were fearful things to go through or look upon. We had none of the sweet patent medicines that the children now cry for, and none of the smooth capsules or the pleasant comfits that turn medicine into confectionery nowadays.

#### Introduced to Walter Scott.

The boys were not allowed in most families to read novels, even on week-days. My father had a great dislike to fiction of all sorts, and for a good while would not tolerate any novels in the house; but one winter day he went to Pepperell, in the northern part of the county, to try a case before a sheriff's jury. About the time the case got through there came a sudden and violent snow-storm, which blocked up the roads with deep drifts so that he could not get home for two or three days. He had to stay at a small country tavern, and the time hung very heavily on his hands.

He asked the landlord if he had any books. The only one he could find was a first volume



of Scott's "Redgauntlet," which was then just published in Boston by a bookseller named Parker, in what was called Parker's revised edition. Father read it with infinite delight. His eyes were opened to the excellence of Scott. He got home the next day at about noon, and immediately sent one of the children down to the circulating library to get the second volume. He subscribed to Parker's edition, and was a great lover of Scott ever after.

We were permitted, however, to read the "Tales of a Grandfather." I hope the boys who read this paper will read the "Tales of a Grandfather," especially the parts which gives the history of Scotland. It is a most interesting and noble story. I can remember now how the tears ran down my cheeks as I read Scott's description of finding the bones of Robert Bruce in the old abbey at Dunfermline:

"As the church would not hold half the numbers, the people were allowed to pass through it one after another, that each one, the poorest as well as the richest, might see all that remained of the great king, Robert Bruce. Many people shed tears; for there was the wasted skull which once was the head, that thought so wisely and boldly for his country's deliverance; and there was the dry bone which had once been the sturdy arm that killed Sir Henry de Bohun, between the two armies, at a single blow on the evening before the Battle of Bannockburn."

#### **Famous Concord Authors.**

There were in Concord in my boyhood three writers who afterward became very famous indeed — Emerson, Hawthorne and Thoreau.

Mr. Lowell said that these three names shone among all others in American literature as the three blazing stars in the belt of Orion shine in the sky.

The whole town loved and revered Emerson, but I fancy the people generally had little notion of his great genius. He used to read lectures to the Lyceum, and in reading his books now I find a great many passages which I remember to have heard him read in my youthful days. In one of his lectures upon Plato, he said that he turned everything to the use of his philosophy, that "wife, children and friends were all ground into paint" — alluding to Washington Allston's story of the Paint King who married a lovely maiden that he might make paint of the beautiful color of her cheeks.

A worthy farmer's wife in the audience took this literally, and left the room in high dudgeon. She said she thought Waldo Emerson might be in better business than holding up to the people of Concord the example of a wicked man who ground his wife and children into paint.

#### **The Old Manse and Its Inmates.**

Mr. Hawthorne had published some short stories which had made his name quite celebrated. But his great fame was still to be gained. He was poor, and had a good deal of difficulty in gaining a decent living for himself and his young wife. They lived in the old Manse, which he has described so delightfully in his "Mosses from an Old Manse."

His wife was a great friend of my oldest sister, and used to visit in our family before she was married. It was owing to that circumstance

that the Hawthornes came to live in Concord. I went up to the house while they were absent on their wedding journey, when I was a little boy, to help put things in order for the reception of the young couple.

The furniture was very cheap ; a good deal of it was made of common pine. But Mrs. Hawthorne, who was an artist, had decorated it by drawings and paintings on the backs of the chairs and on the bureaus. On bedsteads and the headboard of her bed was a beautiful copy, painted by herself, of Guido's *Aurora*, with its exquisite light figures and horses and youths and maidens flying through the air.

Mr. Hawthorne was very silent, and hardly spoke in the presence of any visitor with whom he was not very intimate. He was very fond of long walks and of rowing on the river with Thoreau and Ellery Channing.

#### **Thoreau, the Boys' Friend.**

The boys were all fond of Henry Thoreau. I went to school with him when I was a little boy and he was a big one, and afterward I was a scholar in his school. He was very fond of small boys, and used to take them out with him in his boat, and make bows and arrows for them, and take part in their games. He liked also to get a number of the little chaps of a Saturday afternoon, and go for a long walk in the woods.

He knew the best places to find huckleberries and blackberries and chestnuts and lilies and cardinal and other rare flowers. We used to call him Trainer Thoreau, because, as I have said, the boys called the soldiers the "trainers," and he had a long, measured stride and an erect

carriage, which made him seem something like a soldier, although he was short and rather ungainly in figure. He had a curved nose which reminded one a little of the beak of a parrot.

His real name was David Henry Thoreau, although he changed the order of his first two names afterward. He was a great finder of Indian arrow-heads, spear-heads, pestles, and other stone implements which the Indians had left behind them, of which there was great abundance in the Concord fields and meadows.

He knew the rare forest birds and all the ways of birds and wild animals. Naturalists commonly know birds and beasts and flowers as a surgeon who has dissected the human body, or perhaps sometimes a painter who has made pictures of them knows men and women. But he knew birds and beasts as one boy knows another — all their delightful little habits and fashions. He had the most wonderful good fortune. We used to say that if anything happened in the deep woods which only came about once in a hundred years, Henry Thoreau would be sure to be on the spot at the time and know the whole story. I suppose you remember Emerson's verses :

It seemed that Nature could not raise  
A plant in any secret place,  
In quaking bog or snowy hill,  
Beneath the grass that shades the rill,  
Under the snow, between the rocks,  
In damp fields known to bird and fox,  
But he would come in the very hour  
It opened in its virgin bower,  
As if a sunbeam showed the place,  
And tell its long-descended race.  
It seemed as if the breezes brought him ;  
It seemed as if the sparrows taught him ;  
As if by secret sight he knew  
Where, in far fields, the orchis grew.

Many haps fall in the field  
Seldom seen by wishful eyes,  
But all her shows did Nature yield,  
To please and win this pilgrim wise.  
He saw the partridge drum in the woods ;  
He heard the woodcock's evening hymn ;  
He found the tawny thrushes' broods ;  
And the shy hawk did wait for him ;  
What others did at distance hear,  
And guessed within the thicket's gloom,  
Was shown to this philosopher,  
And at his bidding seemed to come.

These lines fit Henry Thoreau exactly. Most people think Emerson had him in mind when he wrote them. But as a matter of fact, they were written before he knew Henry Thoreau.

I wonder how many know the woodcock's evening hymn. I have known many sportsmen and naturalists who never heard it or heard of it. When the female is on her nest the male woodcock flies straight up into the sky, folds his wings and falls down through the air, coming down within a foot or two of the nest from which he ascended, pouring out a beautiful song, which he never sings at any other time. He is said to be one of the best and sweetest of our song-birds.

It is a singular fact that Emerson did not know Henry Thoreau until after Thoreau had been some years out of college. Henry walked to Boston, eighteen miles, to hear one of Emerson's lectures, and walked home again in the night after the lecture was over. Emerson heard of it, and invited him to come to his house and hear the lectures read there, which he did. People used to say that Thoreau imitated Emerson, and Lowell has made this charge in his satire, "A Fable for Critics :"

There comes —, for instance ; to see him's rare sport,  
Tread in Emerson's tracks with legs painfully short.

I think there is nothing in it. Thoreau's style is certainly fresh and original. His tastes and thoughts are his own. His peculiarities of bearing and behavior came to him naturally from his ancestors of the isle of Guernsey.

I have heard Thoreau say in private a good many things which afterward appeared in his writings. One day when we were walking, he leaned his back against a rail fence and discoursed of the shortness of the time since the date fixed for the creation, measured by human lives. "Why," he said, "sixty old women like Nabby Kettle" (a very old woman in Concord), "taking hold of hands, would span the whole of it." He repeats this in one of his books, adding, "They would be but a small tea-party, but their gossip would make universal history."

#### Other Well-known Writers.

Another man who was famous as a writer went to school, and afterward tended store in Concord in my childhood. This was George H. Derby, better known as John Phoenix. He was also very fond of small boys. I remember his making me what I thought a wonderful and beautiful work of art, by taking a sheet of stiff paper of what was called elephant foolscap, and folding it into a very small square, and then with a penknife cutting out small figures of birds and beasts. When the sheet was opened again these were repeated all over the sheet, and made it appear like a piece of handsome lace.

He did not get along very well with his employer, who was a snug and avaricious person. He would go to Boston once a week to make his purchases, leaving Derby in charge of the store.

Derby would lie down at full length on the counter, get a novel, and was then very unwilling to be disturbed to wait on customers. If a little girl came in with a tin kettle to get some molasses, he would say the molasses was all out, and they would have some more next week. So the employer found that some of his customers were a good deal annoyed.

### **Mr. Alcott and the Children.**

Another rather famous writer who lived in Concord in my time was Mr. A. Bronson Alcott. He used to talk to the children in the Sunday school, and occasionally would gather them together in an evening for a long discourse. I am ashamed to say—and I hope you will all consider this in the strictest confidence, not to be repeated anywhere—that we thought Mr. Alcott rather stupid. He did not make any converts to his theories among the boys.

He once told us that it was wicked to eat animal food; that the animal had the same right to his life that we had to ours, and we had no right to destroy the lives of any of God's creatures for our own purposes. He lived only on vegetable food, as he told us. But he had on at the time a very comfortable pair of calfskin boots, and the boys could not reconcile his notion that it was wicked to kill animals to eat, with killing animals that he might wear their hides. When such inconsistencies were pointed out to him he gave a look of mild rebuke at the audacious offender, and went on with his discourse as if nothing had happened.

The people who do not think very much of Alcott ought to speak with a good deal of

modesty when they remember how highly Emerson valued him, and how sure was Emerson's judgment; but certainly nobody will attribute to Alcott much of the logical faculty. Emerson told me once :

"I got together some people a little while ago to meet Alcott and to hear him converse. I wanted them to know what a rare fellow he was. But we did not get along very well. Poor Alcott had a hard time. Theodore Parker came all stuck full of knives. He wound himself round Alcott like an anaconda; you could hear poor Alcott's bones crunch."

#### **A Story of Margaret Fuller.**

Margaret Fuller used to visit Concord a good deal, and at one time boarded in the village for several months.

She was very peculiar in her ways, and made people whom she did not like feel very uncomfortable in her presence. She was not generally popular, although the persons who knew her best valued her genius highly. But old Doctor Bartlett, a very excellent and kind old doctor, though rather gruff in manner, could not abide her.

One very dark, stormy night, in the middle of the night, the doctor was called out of bed by a sharp knocking at the door. He got up and put his head out of the window, and said, "Who's there? What do you want?" He was answered by a voice in the darkness below, "Doctor, how much camphire can anybody take by mistake without its killing them?" To which the reply was, "Who's taken it?" And the answer was, "Margaret Fuller." The



doctor answered, in great wrath, as he slammed down the window and returned to bed, "A peck!"

### **A Personal Word.**

I have not, in this paper, undertaken an autobiography. I am afraid, if I were to do that, it would be rather a sad story. I said something just now which I asked you to consider as in strict confidence. What I am going to say, I hope none of you will ever tell to anybody. I should feel dreadfully to have it get into the Democratic papers. The old doctor, of whom I have already spoken, in the town of Concord, one of the worthiest and kindest of men, but who was a very outspoken person, said, after my two oldest brothers and I had grown up, that "Samuel Hoar's three boys used to be the biggest little rascals in Concord; but they all seem to have turned out pretty well." But as I said, Keep this a profound secret.

I am afraid these disconnected stories will not go far to convey to you the picture which is very clear in my own mind of the life of a New England boy in a country town sixty years ago. It was a very simple and plain, yet I think a very noble life. The town was as absolute a democracy, in the best sense of the word, as was ever upon earth. The people, old and young, constituted one great family. They esteemed each other because of personal character, and not on account of wealth, or social position, or holding office. The poorest boy in town was the equal of the richest in the school and in the playground. They had all that was needed for comfort in life.

If I were to live my life over again I should not want anything more, and I think all my readers will do well to teach themselves not to care for anything more. Your happiness in this world will come from what you are, and not from what you own. You do not need wealth or luxury, if you have decent clothes and do good, honest work in the world, and have enough to eat and drink, good schools, good books to read, good health, and good parents and brothers and sisters and friends, who will not do a mean thing—these are the things that make life worth living. Everything but one beyond these is apt to spoil men and spoil the pleasure of life.

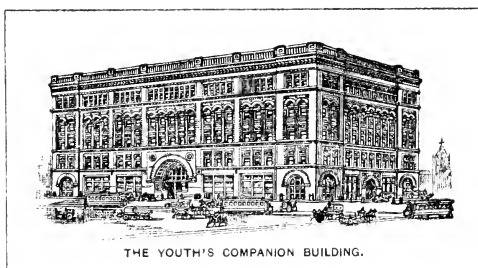
There is one thing beside, greater than all. That is a country that you can love, and that you are ready and willing to live for and to die for.

Every American has that. I hope you will all learn by heart the noble history of your country, and will be ready when your time comes to take the government of it, and make it better and nobler still.

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